

Minutes  
Finance Committee Meeting  
12:15pm, October 28, 2014  
First Floor-North Conference Room, City Hall

Present: Vice Mayor Marc Hunt (Chair), Councilman Gordon Smith,  
Councilwoman Gwen Wisler

Staff: Gary Jackson, Paul Fetherston, Sam Powers, Barbara Whitehorn,  
Tony McDowell, Frank McGowan, Cheryl Heywood

Guests: Tom Youngblood, Aston Park Tennis Center member; Dan Costante,  
Aston Park Tennis Center member

**Approval of 8/27/2014 Minutes**

Councilman Smith made a motion to approve the 8/26/2014 minutes (attachment #6). This motion was seconded by Councilwoman Wisler and was unanimously approved by the committee.

Ms. Barbara Whitehorn said that because of a previous council member's request the minutes are currently very detailed. Ms. Whitehorn asked the committee if they had any objection to summarizing the minutes. All committee members agreed to have future minutes summarized.

**Aston Park Tennis Center**

Mr. Frank McGowan presented the update (attachment #1) on the public progress of the Aston Park Tennis Center. The committee had asked for a public process to get input on any proposed changes to the operation of the facility. Mr. McGowan said the process was for public comments to be gathered through the public portal and to get information from the focus group. The information gathered is included in the report (attachment #2). Staff is in the process of hiring an outside consultant to look at all of the Parks and Recreation fees to include Aston Park.

Councilwoman Wisler said the ideal timeframe would be to implement the fee increases at the beginning of the tennis season. Councilman Smith wanted to confirm that the managing company would not be able to set rates and Mr. Jackson said that council would be able to set the rates. Vice Mayor Hunt said that the subsidy we support is out of balance and a burden to taxpayers for a relatively small group of people and is not justifiable. Vice Mayor Hunt said that we now have a subsidy of around one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and recommended getting to around seventy thousand dollars annual subsidy within three years, and Councilman Smith expressed his desire for a shorter time frame.

### **Public Comment**

Councilman Hunt acknowledged the guests, and said that he would take public comment at this time, rather than at the end of the meeting.

Mr. Tom Youngblood, a member of the Aston Park Tennis Center said that if you miss the fee increase for April, you have missed it for the year because April is when the pass holders come in and sign up. You can not affect the deficit until you look at both the revenue and the expense side of the operation.

Mr. Dan Costante, a member of the Aston Park Tennis Center said that the focus group was shocked when they saw the amount of subsidy from the city and that we have the same goal of reducing the amount of the subsidy the city is providing the Center. What we would like council to do is give us the empowerment to work with staff to come up with a strategic plan that would be beneficial to all stakeholders.

Councilman Hunt said that he appreciated that the group has stepped up and provided substantive recommendations and there should be a way that the group can continue to stay engaged. Council will look primarily to staff to recommend solutions with participation from the user group.

Councilwoman Wisler said that the action steps would be that we are going to work on the user fee study and a detailed operational plan will be completed in connection with the project analysis at which time staff will come back and propose how the user-advisory group will be involved.

### **Audit Update**

Mr. Tony McDowell said that staff will be coming to council on December 9<sup>th</sup> with the audit presentation and then he introduced city staff that played a role in this years' audit. He then introduced Mr. Eddie Burke, from Cherry Bekaert, our auditing firm, who provided the committee with an update on the FY 2013-14 audit (attachment# 3).

### **Civic Center Sale of Surplus Ice/Hockey Equipment**

Mr. Sam Powers summarized the staff report (attachment #5) for the committee. Four years ago, Council gave direction to give this equipment to a non-profit, but they did not meet the terms of the contractual obligation. The equipment is currently in storage and staff would like to proceed with the surplus equipment disposition as expediently as possible. Staff would like for a portion of the proceeds of the sale to be used for repairs at the roller hockey rink at Carrier Park.

The committee recommended that proceeds of the sale would be taken into the civic center fund, and that the repairs to the inline skate park would be factored into decision making into next year's budget.

**Review Property Tax Billing Research**

Ms. Barbara Whitehorn said that since the committee read the report, (attachment #4) and in the interest of time, asked if it would be alright if she just took questions from the committee.

Councilman Wisler said that perhaps the county might be open to negotiation. The City of Asheville's property tax value is going to go up, but the number of bills will remain low, so how the billing is being done with no limitation, gives opportunity. Vice Mayor Hunt said in situations where cost is shared proportionally, is there a way that the finance department could work with the county's finance department on what the costs are and agree to split that on a pro rata basis. Ms. Whitehorn said that the pro rata share is calculated in two different ways: 1.) the number of bills and 2.) annual levy based. One approach would be to appeal to the county to do this together and ask it be reflective of real costs and consider cost sharing or fee reduction. Any changes need to be made prior to December 31<sup>st</sup>. because the bills go out January 1st. The committee asked that Gary approach the county about the possibility of making changes this year.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 1:40p.m